

Porsche Team Germany fails to reach Billie Jean King Cup semifinals

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02/11/2021 The semifinals at the Billie Jean King Cup in Prague will take place without Porsche Team Germany. In the last group match, the German Tennis Association's (DTB) team headed by the Porsche Brand Ambassador Angelique Kerber was defeated 3-0 by Switzerland on Tuesday and have duly exited the finals at the first hurdle.

Tuesday

The team's opening match on the day before at the inaugural finals with the new format containing 12 countries also ended in defeat (2-1) after a hard-fought encounter against the top favourites, the Czech Republic. "We'd have obviously loved to have progressed but not everything in tennis goes the way you like," said team captain Rainer Schüttler. "As a team, we had a fantastic week in Prague but in the end

the disappointment naturally outweighs everything."

In a high-class match, Angelique Kerber prevailed in the face-off between the top stars when beating Barbora Krejikova, the Czech French Open winner and current world No. 3. She was however unable to repeat the brilliant performance against the Olympic champion Belinda Bencic. After winning the first set 7-5, she then lost the second 6-2. There was initially little to choose between the two players in the third set but then with the score at 3-2 in Bencic's favour, the German needed a medical time-out due back spasms and never really got back into the match. Playing highly impressively, Belinda Bencic once again closed out the set 6-2.

"It was a high-class match. Everything hinged on me losing my first service game in the second set. On the whole, Belinda played really well and basically didn't make a single mistake in the third set," said Angelique Kerber. "We're naturally sad and disappointed that we're out of the finals, but we'll try to take away the positives. We had a fabulous week together and gave our all on the court. Above all, it was definitely a great experience for the young players on our team, and one that will help them move forwards. I'm now looking forward to going on holiday before beginning my Australian Open preparations."

Andrea Petkovic, who was making her 18th appearance for Germany at the finals, lost her match 6-4, 7-5 against Viktorija Golubic. In the hard-fought second set, she failed to convert three set points when 5-4 up. "It took a while to get into a rhythm, but it unfortunately wasn't enough," she said. "I lacked a bit of balance on the big points. I had my chances but was unable to take them. She was simply better when it mattered."

After Jule Niemeier against the Czech Republic, the second Porsche Talent Team player also made her Billie Jean King Cup debut in the match against Switzerland. Nastasja Schunk, who got to the Wimbledon juniors final in July, was picked for the concluding doubles with Anna-Lena Friedsam. Aged only 18, she played well after overcoming initial nerves. In the end however, the experienced Viktorija Golubic and Jill Teichmann ran out comfortable 6-1, 6-2 winners.

Monday

After putting up stiff resistance, Porsche Team Germany was eventually defeated 2-1 by the Czech Republic in the opening match of its Billie Jean King Cup Finals campaign in Prague. The German team's only point against the hot favourites came in the match between the top stars when Angelique Kerber performed brilliantly in the O2 Arena to beat the French Open winner Barbora Krejikova 6-7 (5), 6-0, 6-4. It levelled the scores up at 1-1 after her teammate Andrea Petkovic had previously been defeated 6-1 6-3 by Marketa Vondrousova. In the decisive doubles, Anna-Lena Friedsam/Jule Niemeier only just missed out on causing a major upset when losing 6-4, 6-7 (2), 10-8 against the experienced Katerina Siniakova/Lucie Hradecka.

In the encounter between the top two players at the finals – Barbora Krejikova is the world No. 3 and

Angelique Kerber the No. 9 – the Porsche Brand Ambassador impressed with her classy tennis and fighting spirit. 3-0 down in the first set, she came back to first square up the match at 4-4 and then take a 5-4 lead. Also 3-0 behind in the tie-break, she battled her way back to go 5-4 up but, after failing earlier to convert three set points, she however eventually lost the set on a double fault.

“I was so close to winning the first set and was naturally disappointed that I didn’t succeed. Losing it on a double fault was really annoying,” said Angelique Kerber after the high-class match. “I tried to forget the first set and concentrate on finding my rhythm as quickly as possible in the second. And it worked a treat.”

In the second set, she gave her opponent, who won doubles gold at the Tokyo Olympics, a tennis lesson. She did not lose a single game and, even though the third set was a close affair, Angelique Kerber ran out a highly deserved winner. After two hours 18 minutes, she wrapped up the rubber on her first match point to hand Porsche Team Germany its first point. “The atmosphere in the arena was fantastic event though they were basically all for the Czechs,” said the three-time grand slam winner after making her 16th appearance for Germany. “I hope we’ll get more than just the one more chance to enjoy the atmosphere this week.”

In the finals containing the world’s 12 best teams, only the four group winners will progress. Only by winning their second group match on Tuesday against Switzerland will Porsche Team Germany have at least a theoretical chance of advancing to the semifinals. “Switzerland has lots of good players. We’ll watch matches of the highest class” says Andrea Petkovic. “The biggest challenge for us players will be to get back into the groove tomorrow. We’re obviously not used to playing again so quickly after suffering defeat. Normally a whole week goes by.”

In her opening match, Andrea Petkovic faced Marketa Vondrousova. The 34-year-old German, who has now turned out 18 times for her country in the most important women’s team competition making her Porsche Team Germany’s most experienced player, battled hard against the Tokyo Olympics runner-up, especially in the second set. She however succumbed 6-1, 6-3 after 74 minutes. “Everything went against me today. I didn’t play well, and Marketa played exceptionally well,” she said when summing up her display. “What irked me most of all was the fact that I was unable make the match tougher for her when I had a few chances at the start. She hardly made any mistakes and didn’t give anything away. I had to win all my points myself.”

In the all-decisive doubles that only ended after midnight, Jule Niemeier enjoyed an impressive Porsche Team Germany debut. Together with Anna-Lena Friedsam, the Porsche Talent Team player took on the experienced Czech duo of Katerina Siniakova/Lucie Hradecka. They lost the first set 6-4 but came back to win the second 7-6. They also gave the favourites a run for their money in the Champions Tiebreak but eventually went down 10-8.

The matches at the Billie Jean King Cup Finals are being televised live in Germany by the Tennis Channel International streaming service.

Preview

Porsche Team Germany will contest the Billie Jean King Cup by BNP Paribas Finals in Prague from 1 to 6 November with a mixture of experienced players and promising youngsters. The team's number one is the Porsche Brand Ambassador Angelique Kerber. For her, the finals of the most prestigious team competition in women's tennis is one of the season's highlights. "We're in a very strong group with the Czech Republic and Switzerland and we're definitely not the top favourites," says the three-time grand slam winner before play gets underway in the Czech capital. "But we'll be very positive going into the finals and will be battling for every point. Nothing is impossible."

Alongside Angelique Kerber, the national coach Rainer Schüttler has also nominated Andrea Petkovic and Anna-Lena Friedsam plus the Porsche Talent Team's Nastasja Schunk and Jule Niemeier for Porsche Team Germany which qualified for Prague by beating Brazil in February 2020. The inaugural finals of the former Fed Cup will be played as a round robin tournament with 12 teams divided up into four groups.

Andrea Petkovic making her 18th appearance for Germany

Having made 17 appearances since 2007 after first being picked for the doubles in the comfortable 4-1 win against Croatia in the World Group II quarterfinals on 21/22 April, Andrea Petkovic is Porsche Team Germany's most experienced player. She claimed her seventh career WTA title in Cluj-Napoca (Romania) in August and then celebrated her first ever WTA doubles win at the Chicago Fall Tennis Classic. After making her debut in the 3-2 success against Japan in the World Group Playoffs in Toyota on 14/15 July 2007, Angelique Kerber has now turned out a total of 15 times for Germany. The two-time winner of the Porsche Tennis Grand Prix won the Porsche supported premiere of the Bad Homburg Open this summer and then went on to reach the semifinals in Wimbledon and at the WTA1000 tournament in Cincinnati. She also performed impressively at the US Open. Anna-Lena Friedsam has played once for Porsche Team Germany – in the 4-0 win against Brazil in Florianopolis on 7/8 February 2020. This year she secured her second WTA doubles title in Nur-Sultan/Kazakhstan – the first came together with Mona Barthel at the 2019 Porsche Tennis Grand Prix in Stuttgart.

"We've been drawn in an incredibly tough group. Even though two of the Czech Republic's top players have had to withdraw, they've still got a really good team," says Andrea Petkovic. She however feels that Porsche Team Germany is not chanceless: "With Angie and myself, we've got two players capable of causing an upset. Angie has had an excellent second half to the season and I've also had a pretty good year. We want to go a long way and reckon we're in with a good chance. But we're well aware that we've been drawn in the toughest group."

“Jule and Nasti have had a fantastic summer”

Nastasja Schunk and Jule Niemeier are both making their Porsche Team Germany debuts at the Billie Jean King Cup Finals. Supported in the Porsche Talent Team where they are prepared for a career as a professional player, the promising youngsters have recommended themselves for a place in the team captained by Rainer Schüttler. The 18-year-old Nastasja Schunk celebrated the biggest success of her fledgling career when reaching this year's Wimbledon juniors final. She also won two of the most important ITF tournaments. At the Porsche Tennis Grand Prix, she got a taste of WTA life for the first time and then reached the quarterfinals of the WTA tournament in Karlsruhe, Germany. Her four-year older teammate Jule Niemeier made it all the way to the semifinals at the WTA tournaments in Hamburg and Strasbourg. “Jule and Nasti have both had fantastic summers,” says Rainer Schüttler. “They've made unbelievable progress this year.”

Porsche Team Germany will be up against tough opponents right away in the group phase in Prague's O2 Arena. In Group D, Angelique Kerber and her teammates will take on the Czech Republic on 1 November and then Switzerland on 2 November. The hosts have won the unofficial world team championship title in women's tennis six times since 2011 – in the 2014 final against Porsche Team Germany which included Angelique Kerber and Andrea Petkovic. Even though two top stars – Petra Kvitova and Karolina Pliskova, both former winners of the Porsche Tennis Grand Prix – are missing, they are one of this year's big favourites in front of their home crowd. With the reigning French Open champion Barbora Krejcikova and her fellow Tokyo Olympics doubles gold medallist, Katerina Siniakova, in the team, they will still have two of the world's best in action. Belinda Bencic, the Swiss number one, also became an Olympic Champion.

The Billie Jean King Cup by BNP Paribas Finals

The former Fed Cup has been renamed the Billie Jean King Cup this year. The International Tennis Federation (ITF) thus recognises the efforts of the former American world class player to promote professional women's tennis and players' equal rights. The inaugural finals will be played in a new format with 12 top teams divided up into four groups in Prague from 1 to 4 November. Group A: France, Russia (Russian Tennis Federation), Canada, Group B: Australia, Belarus, Belgium, Group C: USA, Spain, Slovakia, Group D. Porsche Team Germany, Czech Republic, Switzerland. Each tie will comprise of two singles and one doubles. The group winners will qualify for the semifinals on 5 November where Group A and C's top teams will face each other as will the Group B and Group D winners. The final will be played on 6 November.

Porsche in tennis

Porsche has been sponsoring the Porsche Tennis Grand Prix ever since 1978 and has also been the organiser since 2002. In the last vote to take place, the tournament in Stuttgart's Porsche Arena was

chosen by the players as their favourite event in its category. Within the scope of its global partnership with the Women's Tennis Association (WTA), Porsche is also the title partner of the "Porsche Race to the WTA Finals", the official qualifying ranking for the WTA Finals. The Stuttgart-based sports car manufacturer is also the exclusive automotive partner of the WTA, the season-ending WTA Finals and of this year's WTA tournaments in Lyon (France), St. Petersburg (Russia), Berlin and Bad Homburg (Germany), Cincinnati (USA), Linz (Austria) and the two events in Cluj (Romania). As a premium partner of the "Deutsche Tennis Bund" (DTB – German Tennis Association), the company supports Porsche Team Germany in the Billie Jean King Cup (formerly the Fed Cup) and fosters up-and-coming players in the Porsche Talent Team and the Porsche Junior Team. Angelique Kerber, Julia Görges and Maria Sharapova give Porsche a face in tennis as Brand Ambassadors.

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